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USSR/SAKHAROV JENNINGS: Exclusive pictures of Soviet dissident, Andrei Sakharov and his wife, Yelena Bonner. What do they tell us?

JENNINGS: Good evening. We begin tonight with the health and welfare of Soviet human rights activist Andrei Sakharov and his wife, Yelena Bonner. First, a note of background. Virtually nothing has been seen or heard from the Sakharovs since they went on a hunger strike three months ago. There has been enormous concern in many parts of the world. ABC News has acquired videotapes which show the Sakharovs within the last month in the Soviet city of Gorky to which they have been exiled. ABC's diplomatic correspondent, Barrie Dunsmore, has this report from London.

DUNSMORE: These pictures of the 63-year-old Sakharov and his 61-year-old wife, Yelena Bonner, were taken surreptitiously. In the Soviet Union, only a security apparatus like the KGB would have been able to do this, and so it must be taken for granted that this is Soviet government propaganda, complete with narration, designed to counter world treatment of the Sakharovs. Sakharov, once a Soviet hero, known as the father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, is a long-time critic of his government's policies. He was sent into exile in Gorky in 1980 for opposing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. On May 2, Sakharov went on a hunger strike, demanding that his wife be allowed to go to the West for medical treatment for heart trouble. Instead, Mrs. Bonner was also confined to Gorky and was publicly accused of collusion with the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and anti-Soviet activity. The videotape thus tries to make several points. Mrs. Bonner is seen driving a car, filling it with gasoline, shopping for vegetables and apparently leading an active, healthy life. No heart trouble there, the pictures are saying. And to prove the pictures are recent, as Mrs. Bonner and her lawyer are walking down the street, someone just happens to be standing nearby reading the July issue of a Soviet sport magazine. As for Sakharov, they want to make the point that he is no longer on a hunger strike, so they show him eating. The quality of the picture indicates a hidden camera in what appears to be a hospital room. To nail down the time, someone brings him a Newsweek magazine. That particular cover, the international edition, came out about six weeks ago. ABC News obtained this videotape through the West Germany newspaper, Bild Zeitung. We believe Bild's contact was Soviet journalist Victor *Louis, who has been the source of Sakharov

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pictures in the past. Some people think he works for the KGB. In any case, Louis has good contacts. He predicted the Soviets would boycott the Olympics the day before the boycott was announced. The full 18-minute tape is extremely heavy handed. It begins by extolling the virtues of beautiful downtown Gorky, a closed city forbidden to Westerners. It shamelessly uses old black-and-white pictures, interspersed with newer ones in color. Although the narration suggests they see each other, only once are the Sakharovs seen together, and that appears to be several years ago. This bears out reports that they are now being kept apart. When Sakharov is pictured, supposedly sunning himself with a friend, he's wearing hospital pajamas and slippers and the friend is a noted Soviet psychiatrist who is awkwardly trying to show the camera that those European magazines are July editions. The narration on the tape is equally cynical. UNIDENTIFIED NARRATOR: And again, a breath of fresh air. What could be more pleasant than a nice chat?

DUNSMORE: Still, Sakharov's son-in-law, who viewed the tape with a friend in a German newspaper office, considered the release of the pictures a positive sign. It was the first time he had seen moving pictures of the Sakharovs in two years and the first word of any kind since May. EFREM\YANKELEVICH (Sakharov's son-in-law): I think I am very grateful to USSR for releasing the pictures, because it was an opportunity to see them.

DUNSMORE: Here in London, human rights activist Alyona Kojevnikov, who knows the Sakharovs, was more skeptical. ALYONA\KOJEVNIKOV (human rights activist): It's not a very reassuring sight, certainly, and I would say that concern for Sakharov should remain at its present high level.

DUNSMORE: One concern expressed by several Western doctors who saw the tape is that Sakharov may have been treated with strong tranquilizers. So what does this videotape really tell us? The pictures firmly establish that as of July, Andrei Sakharov and Yelena Bonner were both alive, that he was no longer on a hunger strike and that she was reasonably mobile. Whether Sakharov is being drugged is at least arguable. The pictures also tell us that in spite of their crude propaganda techniques, the Soviets were sufficiently moved by the the world uproar over the Sakharovs that they had to do something. It's not satisfactory, but it is something. Barrie Dunsmore, ABC News, London.

JENNINGS: This afterthought. In Washington, a group of high-ranking State Department officials and Soviet experts viewed the videotape of Sakharov and Mrs. Bonner, and in that group and joining us now is Richard Burt, the

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assistant secretary of State. Mr. Burt, what do you think? RICHARD\BURT (assistant secretary of State): Well, Peter, I think that we agree with Barrie Dunsmore's conclusion that Andrei Sakharov was probably alive when the film was shot, which appears to be six weeks ago. There's a very good chance, as he said, that he was possibly under drugs, we have no evidence that he is alive today and we have no evidence that he is in contact with his wife. I think the bottom line is that the Soviet Union owes the world far more than this KGB film.

JENNINGS: Why do you think they did it now? BURT: It's hard to say why they did it now. In part, it's a slow season, it's a time when the Europeans are at the beach and when Americans are preoccupied with the Olympics and with the political conventions. One wonders why they didn't wait until September. One wonders why they didn't do it much earlier before the swarm or protest and mounting concern took place, say, two months ago. It maybe took them time to work with him, if they used drugs. Perhaps it took time for the KGB to actually release these films and these pictures they've taken. There is a report that the film you obtained, they made an effort to distribute in the West some time ago but failed.

JENNINGS: Mr. Secretary, is there anybody in your group today who is prepared to make any comment about whether or not you think the Sakharovs are under the influence of any sort of drugs? BURT: No, all we can go on really in the watching of this film is what Mr. Dunsmore stated and that it's clear that Mr. Sakharov is in some kind of sanatorium. He appears to have hospital attire on. He appears very gaunt. And these magazines that were alluded to, these Newsweek magazines and other European magazines, he doesn't really read the magazines, he just glances at them. It's not as though he's concentrating.

JENNINGS: You have learned, I gather simultaneously, or almost at the same time, that Mrs. Bonner has been sentenced by the Soviet courts while this has been going on? BURT: Well, I can't confirm that story, but I can say that we have received reports from the Soviet Union that on Aug. 17, the Soviet judicial system sentenced her to five years of internal exile. And this, if it's true, is a very shocking indictment of the Soviet judicial system.